

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-09 AID-05 CEQ-01 CIAE-00 SOE-02
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 EPA-01 INR-10 IO-13 L-03
NSF-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-05 ICA-11 SS-15 SP-02
DOE-15 INT-05 AGRE-00 /122 W
-----083116 121216Z /43

R 120047Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3899
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, IN, BD
SUBJECT: AUGMENTING THE GANGES WATERS

1. ACCORDING TO TWO RECENT PRESS REPORTS, INDIA HAS
FORMALLY TURNED DOWN BANGLADESH'S REQUEST THAT NEPAL
BE INCLUDED IN THE TALKS ON AUMENTING THE FLOW OF
THE GANGES. BOTH THE INDIAN EXPRESS AND PIT REPORT
THAT THE BDG PROPOSED IN A NOTE JULY 31 THAT EITHER
THE INDO-BANGLADESH JOINT RIVERS COMMISSION
BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE NEPAL OR A NEW COMMISSION
BE SET UP. INDIA'S RESPONSE IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN
SENT LAST WEEK. BURDEN OF THE GOI RESPONSE REPORTEDLY
WAS THE FAMILIAR ONE THAT QUESTION OF AUGMENTING THE
GANGES IS A BILATERAL ISSUE, THAT THE INTERIM
FARAKKA AGREEMENT CALLED FOR SIMULTANEOUS INVESTIGA-
TION OF BOTH THE INDIAN AND THE BANGLADESHI PROPOSALS,
AND THAT INDIA WOULD CONSIDER CONSULTING NEPAL ONLY
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AT A LATER DATE SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.

2. THE NEWS REPORTS REHEARSE THE KNOWN POSITIONS
OF BOTH SIDES. BANGLADESH'S PROPOSAL OF UPSTREAM
STORAGE RESERVOIRS IN INDIA AND NEPAL AND A 19-MILE
WATERWAY FROM NEAPL THROUGH INDIA TO BANGLADESH ARE
GIVEN BRIEF MENTION. GREATER ATTENTION AND JUSTIFICA-

TION ARE GIVEN TO INDIA'S PROPOSAL OF A GANGES-BRAHMAPUTRA LINK CANAL WITH THREE STORAGE DAMS AND A BARRAGE TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN EASTERN INDIA. ACCORDING TO THE EXPRESS, THE INDIAN PROPOSAL WOULD PROVIDE 4.8 MILLION HECTARES OF IRRIGATED LAND IN INDIA AND OVER NINE MILLION ACRES IN BANGLADESH AND WOULD REDUCE FLOOD LEVELS FROM THE BRAHMAPUTRA BY ABOUT THREE TO FOUR FEET. IT ALSO WOULD REPORTEDLY PROVIDE NEARLY 10 MILLION KW OF POWER GENERATION IN BOTH COUNTRIES. THE EXPRESS NOTES THAT THE BDG OBJECTS TO THE LINK CANAL ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD REQUIRE 330,000 ACRES OF LAND AND DISPLACE 300,000 PEOPLE. THE INDIAN ARGUMENT COUNTERS THAT THE CANAL WILL TAKE ONLY 20,000 ACRES AND DISPLACE 60,000 BANGLADESHIS. THE INDIANS FURTHER ARGUE THAT ONLY 70 MILES OF THE 200-MILE LONG PROPOSED CANAL WOULD BE IN BANGLADESH TERRITORY AND THUS THE DISRUPTION WOULD BE EVEN MORE EXTENSIVE ON THE INDIAN SIDE.

3. THE EXPRESS ARTICLE NOTES THAT IN VIEW OF RECENT WIDESPREAD FLOODS IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH, THE GOI HIGHLIGHTED THE FLOOD CONTROL ASPECTS OF ITS PROPOSAL. G.K. REDDY OF THE HINDU (SEPTEMBER 8) ALSO WRITES OF THE NEED FOR A SUSTAINED NATIONAL PLAN WITH INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO CONTROL THE RIVERS OF THE INDO-GANGETIC BASIN. REDDY NOTES THAT ALTHOUGH INTERNATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AGENCIES LIKE THE WORLD BANK WOULD BE READY TO FINANCE A RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, THERE ARE MANY POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS IN SEEKING SUCH ASSISTANCE BECAUSE THE BIG WESTERN POWERS WOULD LIKE TO INVOLVE BANGLADESH AND NEPAL IN SUCH SCHEMES. THEREFORE, REDDY SAYS, "THE REAL CHALLENGE IS WHETHER INDIA CAN OBTAIN ENOUGH INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR TAMING THESE RIVER SYSTEMS, WITHOUT INTERNATIONALIZING THE PROBLEM AT THE BEHEST OF THE BIG POWERS THAT ARE BOUND TO EXERT ALL POSSIBLE PRESSURES TO ENHANCE THEIR OWN LEVERAGE IN THE SUBCONTINENT."

4. COMMENT: THESE RECENT ARTICLES ALL REFLECT INDIA'S STRICT ADHERENCE TO NATIONAL OR "BILATERAL" DEVELOPMENT AND CONTROL OF SUBCONTINENTAL RIVERS AND CONTINUED CRITICISM OF PERCEIVED EFFORTS OF BANGLADESH AND OTHERS TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" THE PROBLEM. GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM, NEGOTIATIONS, RIVERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NEWDE13797
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780382-0309
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780977/aaaacjlo.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1dd55b52-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1468578
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUGMENTING THE GANGES WATERS
TAGS: PBOR, IN, BG
To: STATE KATHMANDU
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1dd55b52-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014